

Illinois Early Learning Council – (ELC) Quality Committee

Facilitated by Co-Chairs Dan Harris and Teri Talan

December 17, 2019 11:30AM – 1:30PM

Meeting Notes

Alethia Travis	Donna Emmons	Lisa Downey
Anna Perry	Faith Arnold	Madelyn James
Christi Chadwick	Gail Nelson	Marcy Mendenhall
Cindy Berrey	Jamilah R. Jor'dan	Maria Estlund
Cindy Mahr	Joleen Patton	Melissa Batchelor
Cindy Rice	Joni Scritchlow	Melissa Johnson
Cindy Wall	Josh Kauffman	Melissa Szymczak
Cornelia Grumman	Joyce Weiner	Tamara Sanders Carter
Dan Harris	Karen Zehnal	Pat Tyman
Dana Garner	Kate Connor	Rebecca Pruitt
Debbie Rogers Jaye	Kira Hamman	Rebecca Vonderlack Navarro
Debrah Clark	Lauren Lansdale	Teri Talan
	Lauri Morrison Frichtl	Tom Layman

Welcome & Introductions

- July meeting notes accepted. Any further edits/revisions to the meeting notes should be sent to jscritchlow@inccrra.org

ExceleRate Subcommittee Report - Tom Layman, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

- The ExceleRate Subcommittee Report is examining standards.
 - The Subcommittee reviewed obstacles for programs achieving higher ratings in ExceleRate and found that some of the standards did not cost much money and others, primarily staffing standards, cost a great deal of money.
 - The subcommittee proposed that the staffing standards that cost a lot of money be the responsibility of the funding systems more than the responsibility of the program.
 - The Subcommittee discussed putting those 2 standards in those 2 buckets in the professional practice bucket and adding continuous quality improvement standards. Would like to move away from cut scores for some of our assessments and move towards evidence that programs have instituted processes that improve continuously every week and every month.
- Proposed in the PDG-B5 federal grant is a pilot in which childcare programs would be funded through contracts rather than per diem certificates. The contract could specify what staff members are being funded. It will create a ladder for programs to move up in the ExceleRate system. In the pilot, rural counties will be selected as the grant proposal required that we focus on rural counties.

- The ExceleRate Subcommittee would finalize the pilot standards to review them for equity and services for priority populations, and to develop a parallel approach to family child care.
- The ExceleRate Subcommittee recommended a more unified system of supports and an expansion for agencies to work with program leaders to implement continuous quality improvements. This information will be tracked in the next year.

Final ECE Compensation Consensus Statement - Bethany Patten, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

- Thanks to various committees and members of committees, including the ELC Quality Committee, that have helped provided input to the consensus statement.
- Input from the various committees have been included into the statement. It is reflective of the various experiences from around the state for the past year.
- The print ready format will be shared with the ELC Quality Chairs for distribution to the committee members.
- A one page summary can be shared and distributed. A link to the document will be placed on the GOECD website.
- Included in the document are the guiding principles, data on the state of compensation in Illinois for early childhood educators, and a series of recommendations on how to raise compensation for educators including:
 - Developing a wage or salary schedule for the education field across childcare and preschool.
 - Include ECE contracts and including the ExceleRate Circles of Quality final conclusions recommending increasing reimbursement rates, and they currently stand childcare eligibly and cost modeling.
- The work is wrapping up, but the work is not done.
 - Wage scale recommendation has largely informed the work that GOECD contracted with NIU regarding cost modeling. Those models have been tweaked slightly from the consensus statement to better reflect where we want to see the field go.

Illinois Council for Development Disabilities Report - Kira Hamman, Illinois State University (Attachment)

- Preparing Teachers to Work with Young Children with Special Needs in Illinois: The Illinois Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Preparation Landscape Study
- Purpose: Identify gaps and opportunities within the Early Childhood-Special Education teacher preparation landscape in Illinois.
 - Early Childhood Education + EC/SPED LA
 - Special Education + EC/SPED LA
 - Early Childhood Education + ECSE

- Prior to this study, no earlier study had explored the similarities or variations across these pathways at Illinois institutions of higher education, nor how this related to preparing teachers for students with special needs in early childhood classrooms.
- Research Questions
 - What are the existing processional pathways?
 - How are existing professional pathways incorporated?
 - How many teachers have obtained licensure and or letters of approval?
 - How have recent ISBE mandates for ECE programs impacted teacher preparation pathways?
- 27 Four year institutions identified. 11 public and 16 private participated.
- Articulation: Majority of institutions do not accept articulated EC/SPED LA courses.
 - No articulation 15
 - Willing to articulate at least 1-2 courses 7
- Tracking: Most EC/SPED LA are tracked through Licensure Office
 - Registrar's Office 5
 - Licensure Office 18
 - School of Education 2
- Discussion: Present Pathways Challenges
 - Articulation
 - Need more of this
 - Presently, IAI ECE panel has approved 2 that can help
 - Pathway Clarity
 - Confusion in accounting creates issues
 - Ensuring accurate and aligned institutional counts
 - Study Generalizations
 - Unsure of actual inclusive field placements
 - More difficult to generalize impact

Initiatives/Key Highlights from State Partners

Illinois Department of Human Services

- Cindy Wall, no report at this time.

Illinois State Board of Education

- No report from an ISBE representative is available.
- Changes from Part 25 have been made and been approved. Cathy Main reported that the alternative certification was approved.

Advocacy Partners, Joyce Weiner and Maria Estlund

- Advocacy is proposing to the General Assembly a larger state budget for childcare.
 - There has been growth in the caseload and the administration is talking about expanding access.
 - Asking for an increase of 150 million dollars in the Early Childhood Block Grant. The Illinois State Board of Education has proposed 100 million dollar increase.

- Implementing recommendations for GOECD to expand compensation parity. Need to make sure money is put in the funding streams in order for this to happen.
 - Early Intervention will be asking for a 25 million dollar increase to meet increase caseload demand and provider reimbursement rates.
- The Funding Commission consists of individuals specific to early childhood. The Commission has held its first meeting. Commission recommendations are due to the public in January 2021. The recommendations could be taken into account for the budget address in February 2021.
- The Federal budget could include more than 5 billion Child Care and Development Block Grant and 10 billion for Head Start and Early Head Start.

Teach Plus Survey

- Josh Kaufman introduces the Teach Plus Initiative.
- A group of early childhood educators from around Illinois who are Teach Plus Policy Fellows, are focusing on the ECE teacher shortage.
- Interested in the potential for creating an alternative pathway for current classrooms teaching assistants with AA degrees to earn BA degrees.
- Vision is that an alternative pathway would recognize previous work and provide course credit.
- Would like to survey ECE teachers who are not yet lead teachers to learn their thoughts about and interest in alternative pathways.
- Want to make sure not to conflate work credit with PLA (prior learning assessment).
- See attachment regarding proposed survey.

House Bill Information, Dan Harris INCCRRA

- 250 million for quality improvement.
- 193 million for cost of living increase.
- 100 million for Early Head Start expansion and partnership.
- New grant for higher education to link higher education reform with state policy.

Next Meetings: April 21, 2020

July 21, 2020

Attachment

Preparing Teachers to Work with Young Children with Special Needs in Illinois:

the Illinois Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Preparation Landscape Study

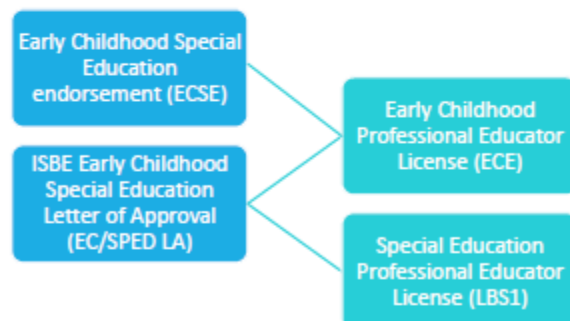
Kira A. Hamann, Nancy I. Latham,
& Johnna Darragh-Ernst

High-Quality Inclusion Practices within the Illinois EC Professional Development System: New Approaches to Breaking Down Barriers Grant funded by the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A common barrier to developing more inclusive preschool programs are attitudes and beliefs about the inclusion of children with disabilities (Barton & Smith, 2015). This barrier highlights the importance of personnel training and the need to build systems of professional development for child care programs that include content related to inclusion. In Illinois, where this study was positioned, in order for Early Childhood (ECE) and Special Education (SPED) teachers to teach in Early Childhood/ Special Education public school classrooms, specific Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) licensure requirements existed along multiple pathways, each including either a bachelor's or master's degree (ISBE Educator Effectiveness Division, n.d.a., n.d.b.). As of 2018-2019, at the time of the study, depending on the educator's original licensure area, designated by an endorsement on one's Illinois Professional Educator License, the additional requirements to serve in these classrooms varied as follows:



Purpose

Prior to this study, no earlier study had explored the similarities or variations across these pathways at Illinois institutions of higher education, nor how this related to preparing teachers for students with special needs in early childhood classrooms. A part of a larger project funded by the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD), with a primary goal of better understanding the Early Childhood workforce preparation pathways in Illinois, the purpose was to explore these various pathways by identifying gaps and opportunities within the current Early Childhood/ Special Education teacher preparation landscape.

Methods

Sample

Illinois 4-year colleges and universities, offering program pathways leading to the Early Childhood Special Education endorsement or the Early Childhood Special Education Letter of Approval as identified the Illinois State Board of Education Directory of Approved Programs 2017 (Illinois State Board of Education Center for Education Effectiveness, 2017), were included in this study. In total, there were 27 four-year colleges or universities, including 11 public and 16 private, non-profit 4-year colleges and universities across the state in our analyses.



Figure 1. Regional map of participating Illinois 4-year universities and colleges highlighting the number of institutions offering at least one early childhood special education-type of pathway

Data Sources & Analysis

Data used in this study were collected by open-ended interviews with university representatives, including teacher education licensure officers ($n = 10$), and if and when they deferred participation, recommended department contacts from early childhood and special education departments ($n = 10$). Messages were left for the licensure officers at the remaining institutions ($n = 7$), and to capture data from these institutions, web page analyses of their university websites were conducted. Using keywords such as, “early childhood,” “early childhood special education,” “early childhood special education letter of approval,” and “school of education” helped to locate university pages describing these early childhood and special education programs that offered one or more of these licensure pathways. Data collected from the interviews or artifact collection were analyzed and coded for patterns related to program design, offerings, dissemination of offerings/requirements for candidates, and the number and type of credentials obtained over time.

Results

Descriptions from representatives of the participating programs and their programs’ websites revealed both similarities and gaps in regard to program offerings and design for the various pathways for early childhood and special education teacher preparation. In this section, we will include a bulleted summary of results under each emerging theme.

Preparation Pathways to Teaching Young Children with Special Needs

Quick summary:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were a multitude of possibilities within three basic pathways, i.e., whether offered at the graduate or undergraduate level, whether built into or added onto a majored program• The most common pathway was the Early Childhood Special Education Letter of Approval (EC/SPED LA), predominantly added on to/ built into an ECE Professional Educator License at the undergraduate level• Employment options of the different pathways were confusing for some licensure officers across Illinois

Pathway Design and Logistics

Quick Summary:

- The most commonly pursued pathway, the early childhood/special education letter approval, required educators to take courses covering four specific early childhood-special education domains, and most programs offering this pathway build these courses at least partially into their ECE or SPED majors
- Half of participating institutions did not allow students to transfer in courses required for their letter of approval
- A majority of participating institutions tracked completion of the pathway through the licensure office on campus and at the point of entitlement

Completers in Illinois

Quick summary:

- There was a lack of continuity between state-level identification of completer totals and that of institution representatives
- State-level identification of EC/SPED LA completers for the last three years showed that between 73-76% of all possible ECE educators had this specialized licensure for working with young students with special needs (Dimmit-Salinas, 2017) the year of the study
- Institutional data revealed that almost half of programs were graduating between 10-20 educators annually who had one of these specialized forms of licensure
- The biggest discrepancy in data sources was in the area of the ESCE license. Institutions self-identified significantly more completers annually than the State

Illinois Early Childhood Education Program Redesign Effects

Quick summary:

- The only programs feeling any effects at all were ECE programs, as Special Education and ECSE programs had not been asked by ISBE to redesign as of 2018
- Some programs felt no effect from redesign at the time of the study as the pathway status remained the same in their newly-approved programs
- A few program representatives shared that the EC/SPED LA pathway was no longer embedded in their major program
- Other program representatives expressed that either their ability to build in components had diminished, or their programs had been “sunset-ed” causing them to have to wait for results because of the redesign process
- Many program representatives shared that “only time will tell” what bigger effects this has on the number of completers for specialized licensure pathways

The Illinois Landscape

Data collection revealed multiple pathways available for current and future practitioners to teach young students with special needs. Existing Illinois programs included opportunities bundled within endorsements and majors that are offered at the undergraduate and graduate level. This finding reveals that there are many programs across the state of Illinois offering at least some way to earn specialized licensure related to working with young children with special needs. The majority of represented programs built required pathway courses into their course sequences, likely making it easier for teacher candidates to complete the licensure pathway at the same time that they were completing their majors. The sheer amount of variance in pathway options revealed in this study reflects national trends in teacher preparation (Call & McDonnell, 2018), and several of these participants revealed confusion and frustration at the pathway variance.

Limitations

1. **This study was limited by the scope (i.e. the current landscape of these pathways).** Findings reveal that there are many programs across the state of Illinois offering at least some way to earn specialized licensure related to working with young children with special needs, with the EC/SPED LA pathway being the most common, and the majority building in these pathways. However, data was not collected on the efficacy of these pathways, including exploring access for practitioners, quality of programming/ graduates, pathway clarity, and graduation rate. Data in these areas would lend important insight into whether or not common pathways are reflective of practitioner/ field needs.
2. **We did not explore the nuances of field placements in relation to the study's scope.** As such, an overall challenge of the present study is the ability to generalize data gathered to support statewide professional inclusion preparation. As opportunities to practice within an inclusive setting is related to support for inclusion (Kurth & Forber-Pratt, 2017), data collection regarding student teaching placement in Illinois would be beneficial.
3. **This study took place in the midst of State-level redesign of Early Childhood programs.** As such, data collected in the present study may not reflect emerging strengths of programs, including strides in the area of articulation and additional pathway clarity. Additional data collection on updated programs is needed.

Present Pathway Challenges & Recommendations

1. **Establishing Smoother Articulation Between Institutions.** At the time of data collection, very little was being articulated between 2-year and 4-year institutions related to these pathways. Although possible courses existed, they were not offered creating roadblocks within pathways. At the time of this study's dissemination, the Early Childhood panel of the Illinois Articulation Initiative had approved two courses that likely to be offered at four-year programs offering the EC/SPED LA pathway ("The Exceptional Child" and "Child, Family, and Community"). Smoother articulation like this will potentially aid in teacher preparation.
2. **In the Present, Creating Clearer Pathways.** Multiple forms of confusion (e.g. what earning an EC/SPED LA entitled a teacher to do; what actual grade spans of the LBS1 license entitled a teacher to teach (as this specifically applied to preschool); what was the optimal pathway development for ease and transparency; and lack of continuity between number of completers reported by the Illinois State Board of Education and the those reported by institutions) created challenges in discerning levers that might increase pathway access, clarity, and completion. Ensuring accurate Illinois State Board of Education and institutional counts (that are in alignment) are just one step towards addressing this confusion. Aligning accurate counts will help clarify graduation rates and potentially illuminate information regarding pathway clarity.
3. **In the Future, Creating Clearer Pathways.** In Illinois, the Professional Educator License (PEL) in Illinois was originally intended to include the design of subsequent endorsement frameworks for candidates to add during preparation or while in-service. Higher education institutions around the state have worked with ISBE to develop the frameworks and requirements for subsequent endorsements on a PEL, including both an early childhood education endorsement that could be added to the LBS1—Special Education PEL and a special education subsequent endorsement which could be added to the Early Childhood Education PEL. These recommendations were recently approved to move forward into licensure rules at the State level. This move could potentially do much to unify the variance, confusion, and lack of clarity related to how Illinois educators are prepared for working with young students with special needs.

References

- Barton, E. E., & Smith, B. J. (2015). Advancing high-quality preschool inclusion. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 35*(2), 69-78.
- Call, J., & McDonnell, A. P. (2018). Partnering with families: A national survey of ECSE student teachers. [Manuscript in preparation].

Dimmit-Salinas, T.D. (2017). Gateways to Opportunity State Panel: Illinois State Board of Higher Education. April 2017, Bloomington Illinois.

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Kurth, J. A., & Forber-Pratt, A. (2017). Views of inclusive education from the perspectives of preservice and mentor teachers. *Inclusion*, 5(3), 189-202.



We are a group of early childhood educators from around Illinois who are also Teach Plus Policy Fellows, where we are focusing on making an impact on the teacher shortage in ECE across the state. We are specifically interested in the potential for creating an alternative pathway through which current classroom teaching assistants with AA degrees can earn a BA degree. Because we know that TAs gain valuable early childhood knowledge and skills in the classroom, and that finding the time and money to return to school to complete coursework can be a barrier to this transition, our vision is that such an alternative pathway would recognize and provide course credit for this experience. We would like to survey ECE teachers who are not yet lead teachers to learn their thoughts about and interest in alternative pathways.

Proposed Survey:

- 1) Are you interested in being a lead teacher? (yes or no)
- 2) What is currently preventing you from becoming a lead teacher? (short answer)

The state of Illinois is considering adopting "competency based assessments" to provide students with an opportunity to earn course credit for prior work experience and skill when completing a credential, degree, or licensure. These competency-based assessments may include a combination of performance tasks (such as teaching a model lesson), artifact submissions (such as writing a lesson plan), online multiple choice and open-response questions, and observations of classroom practice. Existing examples of competency-based assessments can be found on the IL Gateways to Opportunity website [here](#).

One's score on the competency-based assessments could award students with course credit for prior knowledge, thus

- a. reducing the number of courses required for credential or degree completion
 - b. reducing the cost of a credential or degree for students
 - c. reducing the time it takes to complete a credential or degree for students
- Note: I added credential as targeted to lead teachers—could be Level 3 up and/or attainment of licensure

- 3) If higher education programs across the state offered this competency-based assessment, would you consider taking assessments as part of the requirements to becoming a lead teacher? (yes or no)
 - a) Why or why not? (Short answer)

In addition to competency-based assessments, the state of IL is working to create teacher certification programs that are flexible to the needs of working professionals. The state is considering expanding programs to include night, weekend, and/or online coursework to support students' degree completion.



- 4) If programs across the state offered these competency-based assessments with an option for a combination of night, weekend, and/or online coursework, would you consider doing it and becoming a lead teacher? (yes or no)
 - a) Why or why not?
- 5) If competency-based assessments and a combination of night, weekend, and/or online coursework would not completely remove the barriers you are experiencing in becoming a lead teacher, which additional supports would you need in order to become a lead teacher?